

Contrastive Form-Focused Instruction in Improving Vocabulary

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Abstract

The present study investigated the effectiveness of contrastive form-focused instruction (CFFI) in improving the vocabulary skills of grade 11 public school senior high school students from the general academic strand. The study also demonstrated the potential of CFFI coupled with subtitled videos to enhance vocabulary learning and should be considered in future educational practices. A quasi-experimental pretest-post-test design was utilized to evaluate the dependent variables before and after the intervention and overall results indicate that CFFI significantly improved learners' understanding of the target words, leading to better vocabulary skills. Results further suggest that CFFI has the potential to provide a valuable learning platform for learners to develop a more nuanced understanding of L2 vocabulary words and their semantic differences from learners' L1. Moreover, the study's findings have implications for teaching methodologies, especially in teaching other subject areas. Since CFFI can serve as a valuable tool to help learners expand their vocabulary using their existing lexical schema as a springboard to build a sufficient vocabulary repertoire necessary to learn more new words and develop other skills, it may positively impact the overall academic performance of students, particularly the struggling learners who may have learning gaps and experienced learning loss.

Keywords: *vocabulary learning, vocabulary skills, form-focused instruction, contrastive analysis*

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1. Introduction

Recent studies have highlighted the critical role of vocabulary in second language (L2) acquisition (Karami, 2019; Lestari & Isma, 2019). For L2 learners, possessing a wide range of vocabulary knowledge is a prerequisite for success in all four language macro skills and effective communication in the target L2 (Kivrak & Gokmen, 2019); as such, deficiency in this all-important language learning component will inevitably lead learners to a cycle of frustration and failure in their academics (Khany & Khosravian, 2014 as cited in Ghalebi et al., 2020). It is, therefore, imperative for L2 learners to focus on building their vocabulary and for the teachers to give sufficient attention to what would work best to help learners in this area because the success of the latter's language learning and the overall academic journey is highly dependent on their vocabulary proficiency.

Research has shown that a lack of vocabulary knowledge is a significant factor in learners' reluctance to engage with reading and listening materials (Ghalebi et al., 2020). Encountering unfamiliar words while reading or listening can hinder their comprehension and ability to extract meaning from the text or spoken message. Consequently, constantly engaging with novel words can have a cumulative effect, amplifying the difficulties experienced by learners and exacerbating their comprehension challenges. If learning words is necessary to learn more new words and analyze the concepts learners encounter (Keshta & Al-Faleet, 2013; Kusrini, 2012), there is a probability that feelings of discouragement may eventually arise, especially if they perceive that their lack of vocabulary impedes their language learning. The fear of meeting more unfamiliar vocabulary and the associated challenges may deter learners, especially the struggling ones, from actively engaging with texts or spoken messages, leading to a decline in their overall language development and proficiency. Consequently, this incapacity to further develop their vocabulary knowledge is also detrimental to their performance in other content areas.

The field of second language teaching and learning is a dynamic and ever-changing landscape, and it has been recently experiencing critical shifts in its pedagogical approach that embraces more dynamic, multimodal, and inclusive methodologies that cater to the multilingual classroom environment (Anderson, 2022). In multilingual classrooms – such as those in the Philippines where English is learned and taught as a second or additional language

– Cenoz and Gorter (2021) argue that utilizing learners' prior linguistic repertoire can be a valuable support in learning another language. It is only natural that learners use their linguistic resources in the exploration of a target L2 (Morales et al., 2020), and linking their existing vocabulary knowledge to process new information is likewise instinctive (Romero-Villamil & Guzman-Martinez, 2020). In the middle of ongoing discussions among scholars and researchers regarding the most effective strategies and approaches for teaching and learning a second language, contrastive form-focused instruction (CFFI) has emerged as a promising and timely instructional approach to enhance learners' attention to language forms and features, including vocabulary. Unlike traditional vocabulary instructional methods, CFFI advances a multilingual platform for language learning since it involves explicit instruction using cross-linguistic analysis to draw learners' attention to similarities and differences between their first and another target language. By doing so, learners gain a more comprehensive understanding of L2 vocabulary words and their usage in context. This form of vocabulary instruction considers what the learners primarily know and regards it as a starting point. Furthermore, studies have shown that the approach promotes deeper learning and vocabulary retention (Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Jahangard, 2022).

Despite the potential benefits of this pedagogical approach in teaching vocabulary, it is surprising that there is a paucity of studies investigating its effectiveness, as noted by Ahmadi (2016) and Laufer and Girsai (2008). The lack of research is worth investigating in the context of Philippine education, where the effectiveness of the cross-linguistic lexical approach has not been explored nor given attention. Moreover, exploring its potential will help determine the optimal strategies for its implementation and enable educators to develop innovative vocabulary instruction, which will support and cater to the unique needs of Filipino learners in achieving success not just in learning the target language but also in other learning or subject areas.

2. Literature review

2.1. Form-focused instruction

Form-focused instruction (FFI) is considered an overarching term that includes pedagogical approaches or techniques that draw the attention and focus of learners to a target language form that can be grammatical or lexical (Collins, 2012; Long, 1997 as cited in

Marefat & Hassanzadeh, 2016). The term "FFI" refers to a comprehensive range of deliberate or spontaneous instructional methods designed to direct learners' attention toward linguistic structures, and these methods encompass both conventional teaching approaches rooted in structural syllabi as well as communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies (Ellis, 2016). For Lightbown and Spada (2013), FFI can be done "by giving metalinguistic information, simply highlighting the form, or by providing corrective feedback" (p.218).

Long (1997) is known for distinguishing the two types of FFI: one being the Focus on Form (FonF) and the other being the Focus on Forms (FonFs) approach. He defines the former as an approach where learners' attention is directed to linguistic forms as problems or confusion arise in an actual communicative interaction or activity. Thus, the need to negotiate with meaning and resolve language and semantic issues is done in real-time. With this form of pedagogical approach, learners are viewed as language users using the target language as a means of communicating. FonFs, on the other hand, is considered as the traditional approach where the target linguistic form is preselected so teachers or curriculum designers can tailor the lessons and instructional materials (Long, 1998). Sheen (2003 as cited in Marefat & Hassanzadeh, 2016) provides a list of techniques that serve as pillars of FonFs instruction: "grammatical explanations, deductive presentation of the subject matter, translation, the use of the native tongue, and contrastive analysis..." (p. 108).

There has been ongoing discussion regarding which FFI instruction is more effective and would provide better language learning gains for second language learners. Although no definite and conclusive consensus would prove which is better, it is nonetheless apparent in the results of empirical studies that both FonF and FonFs can provide positive results in language learning (Laufer, 2010). FFI in general facilitates greater learner awareness and attentiveness towards linguistic structures when they are encountered in meaningful communicative tasks, creating an environment highly conducive to language acquisition (Ellis, 2016; Sippel, 2021 as cited in Chen & Li, 2022).

Nakatsukasa and Loewen's (2015) work involving FFI investigates how an American teacher's use of her L1, which is English, influences her explicit instructions or what the researchers call Focus on Form episodes (FFE) in teaching the target L2, Spanish. The researchers video-recorded 12 hours of teaching time in a university-level Spanish as a Foreign Language classroom with an L1 English teacher. Twenty-three participants, who are all L1

English speakers and enrolled in a Spanish 202 class, were selected. The study's qualitative data suggest that the teacher's language usage is influenced by the complexity of the linguistic structures taught, as evidenced by their tendency to use more L1 when dealing with more intricate structures. Indeed, the study is one critical example of how using L1 or a mix of both L1 and L2 can be useful in facilitating student comprehension and language learning.

In an attempt to examine the effectiveness of both FonF and FonFs approaches in vocabulary development, Marefat and Hassanzadeh (2016) worked on a classroom-based study that primarily sought to determine which of the two approaches is more efficient. Eighty-eight Iranian university students in four classes were given a series of teacher-designed mini-lessons. Two groups used the FonF approach, one was FonFs, and the last class used a meaning-focused approach. It is noteworthy that the medium of exposure to the target lexical items was through watching video podcasts (newscasts). Podcasts according to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, (2011) are "digital audio and visual recordings that can be created and downloaded, that is, moved from the Internet to an individual computer" (p. 213). The respondents' vocabulary gains were measured by immediate and delayed vocabulary and comprehension tests, and the results of the tests show that participants from the FonF group outperformed the FonFs group in all three variables which are word recall, word retention, and comprehension.

Laufer and Girsai's (2008) work on how focus on form, when coupled with explicit contrastive analysis instruction, can enhance learning new vocabulary from language learning tasks. The study sought to compare the vocabulary acquisition of three groups, each of which was placed under a specific teaching-learning condition. The first group's instructional condition is meaning-focused instruction (which focuses on overall text comprehension) while the second group is non-contrastive form-focused instruction (which means students zero in on target words, but more focus is given on the target words' lexical or phrasal equivalents in the target language since classroom interactions were done only in English, same with the first group). The third group, on the other hand, used contrastive analysis and translation, and learners received explicit contrastive instruction to show the similarities and differences between the target L2 words from the sentences in their translation tasks and their possible L1 equivalents. As such, L1 was utilized by the learners in negotiating word meanings. The results of their study revealed how the group that received explicit instruction to assist learners in

noticing the nuances during the cross-linguistic analysis of target vocabulary outperformed the two other groups. The process of translation, together with contrastive analysis, helped in lexical recall and retention.

In a study by Laufer (2006), she compared the language learning affordances of both FonF and FonFs approaches to learning L2 words. One hundred fifty-eight high school students studying English were selected to participate and divided into two groups. During the conduct of phase 1, one of the groups received FonF instruction, and they were required to read a text containing the target L2 words, discuss and collaborate in small groups, and accomplish comprehension questions. Meanwhile, the FonFs group studied the target vocabulary as discrete lexical items that include their definitions and sample usage in sentences. After phase 1, results revealed that the FonFs group scored higher than those who received FonF instruction.

2.2. The Lexical Dilemma

Recent studies involving Filipino senior high school students have revealed their poor lexical knowledge that has gravely affected their academic performance in all four macro skills (Santillan & Daenos, 2020; Blas et al, 2018; Alico, 2020). A study by Magcamit (n.d.) involving senior high school students in Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro, also showed that students' limited vocabulary hindered their text comprehension. The study further posits that one major contributing factor is the K-12 curriculum's neglect to provide innovative teaching strategies in vocabulary instruction. These studies highlight the importance of acquiring both vocabulary breadth, which refers to the number of words learned by the learner, and depth, which is concerned with the awareness of multiple meanings and word associations and the appropriateness of word usage (Gleason & Ratner, 2013). According to Alico (2020), the vocabulary poverty of most Filipino learners, especially in public schools, is alarming because the senior high school curriculum requires learners to finish capstone writing projects such as research and concept papers, film and literature reviews, and analytical expositions which will all demand a significant amount of vocabulary and a substantial mastery of the English language.

With the vocabulary poverty most senior high school students are experiencing, this pressing dilemma significantly creates an unmistakable signal for educators in the Philippines, such as those who teach English or literature, to revitalize vocabulary instruction, especially in

public school classrooms. As this present study suggests, a teaching approach that entails the utilization of students' L1 in learning new vocabulary in the target L2 can be a potential alternative to teaching learners L2 vocabulary because if a struggling second language learner "is to be helped in his/her vocabulary usage, an understanding of what makes a word inappropriate in a given context is essential" (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 239). Thus, learners' L1 plays a critical role in scaffolding L2 learning.

Levine (2011) maintains that conducting an English subject entirely in L2 to give learners the benefit of fully exposing them to the language does seem ideal to most educators. However, exposure to the target language is generally limited to the classroom, and learning the L2 may not be maximized in a class conducted entirely using the L2. The study further posits how empirical evidence shows that incorporating learners' L1 helped them learn and understand the target language more because learners were more actively involved in class activities. This suggests that using L1 may help bring down the affective filter of learners. Paz (2018) contends that there is no conclusive empirical evidence that obliging learners to use only the L2 would guarantee L2 proficiency.

The importance of utilizing students' L1 and the contrastive approach to teaching vocabulary is also underscored in the study done by Tumlos-Castillo and Baylon (2015), wherein they examined how language affected the performance of fourth-year students of De La Salle Santiago Zobel School (DLSZ) in the National Achievement Test (NAT) in Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies). Results of their study showed that the students, whose Social Studies subject is mainly taught in English across all levels, had a difficult time comprehending the test items in the Araling Panlipunan NAT exam because the questions were in Filipino and utilized words that the students were unfamiliar with since they lacked opportunities to encounter them in class. As a result, the researchers consider how a bilingual method of instruction in Social Studies would be more helpful to students since Filipino terminologies in Araling Panlipunan can be explicitly and substantially explained to students.

In the highly controversial issue of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 results that involved 15-year-old Filipino learners, the Philippines has one of the highest percentages of low-performing students in reading, with over 80% of students failing to achieve the minimum level of proficiency among the seventy-nine countries that participated in the international assessment (Villegas, 2021). Cayubit (2012) asserts that vocabulary and

comprehension are related but distinct skills. Vocabulary learning involves recognizing words and understanding their meanings, whereas reading comprehension involves understanding the content of what has been read. However, Cayubit maintains that developing a strong vocabulary is an important first step in achieving good reading comprehension. As such, the PISA results can only imply a low level of vocabulary proficiency among Filipino learners. Since reading comprehension skill is integral in all subject areas, this may likewise explain why Filipino learners who participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) struggled to keep up with learners from other participating countries.

It cannot be over-emphasized how vocabulary knowledge is vital for second language learners to produce and comprehend the target language (Kivrak & Gokmen, 2019), knowledge that is "central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" (Schmitt, 2000, p.55). The adverse effects of learners' lexical poverty may also explain why the results of recent international proficiency examinations, especially in reading comprehension tests, need to be addressed and meticulously studied so that appropriate remediation can be planned and developed. As previously mentioned, if learning words is a prerequisite to learning or acquiring more words, then it is essential that an intensive L2 vocabulary instruction be incorporated somewhere on top of the priority list of curriculum developers as gaining information and knowledge in all other subject areas can be detrimentally affected by a deficiency in vocabulary. If the current methods of teaching do not reflect favorable results, then it is probably about time that Filipino educators try a different and more innovative teaching approach (Orbeta & Paqueo, 2022).

2.3. Theoretical framework

The present study is anchored in Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, which is at the core of contrastive form-focused instruction (CFFI) as a pedagogical approach that aims to draw learners' attention to target language input. Schmidt (1990, 1994, as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008) explains that the noticing hypothesis "states that learners must consciously notice forms and the meanings of these forms realize in the input to convert input into an intake for learning" (p. 697). In other words, CFFI serves as a noticing mechanism for drawing learners' attention to the target language input and presenting or explaining it to them in a comprehensible form until they have grasped the intended meaning. By creating a learning environment that

promotes the noticeability or input enhancement of the target language input, learners are more likely to develop accurate and fluent language skills.

Initially used by Sharwood Smith (1993 as cited in Marefat & Hassanzadeh, 2016), input enhancement is a manipulation of the input to heighten learners' awareness of the target linguistic features. In the present study, input enhancement is made through contrastive or cross-linguistic analysis of target vocabulary words. According to Laufer and Girsai (2008), one efficient method to make foreign language input noticeable is to enhance it through contrastive association with its corresponding L1 equivalent. Students use filtering and translating with the aid of their native tongue to process and make sense of any information or input (Leonardo, 2011). This suggests how utilizing the L1 can help turn the L2 input into an intake, and this is supported by Atkinson (1987), who posits that using the L1 in learning a target L2 plays a critical role in developing fluency and linguistic awareness because when learners encounter L2 input, they need to map out the lexico-semantic equivalents of the input in their L1.

In addition to input enhancement, Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning is another principle that complements the noticing hypothesis. Mayer (2014) argues that learners are more likely to absorb and retain information when presented with words and pictures rather than just words or text. This has significant implications for language learning, as it suggests that video subtitles can be a highly effective source of language input. In second language learning, video subtitles provide a combination of visual and textual input that can enhance vocabulary acquisition. Mayer's theory suggests that when learners are exposed to unfamiliar words in the target L2 through video subtitles, these words become more salient and noticeable. By linking new words with images and context provided by the video, learners can form stronger mental connections and retain the information more effectively. As Vanderplank (1988, as cited in Baranowska, 2020) aptly puts it, "One advantage of subtitles is the fact that they help learners notice unfamiliar language, which is otherwise lost in the speech stream" (p. 106).

As shown in this study, target vocabulary words were presented through video subtitles at the start, which helped learners become aware of the newly encountered lexical items. Vocabulary awareness was heightened through cross-linguistic comparison, which allowed learners to draw connections between the new vocabulary and their existing knowledge.

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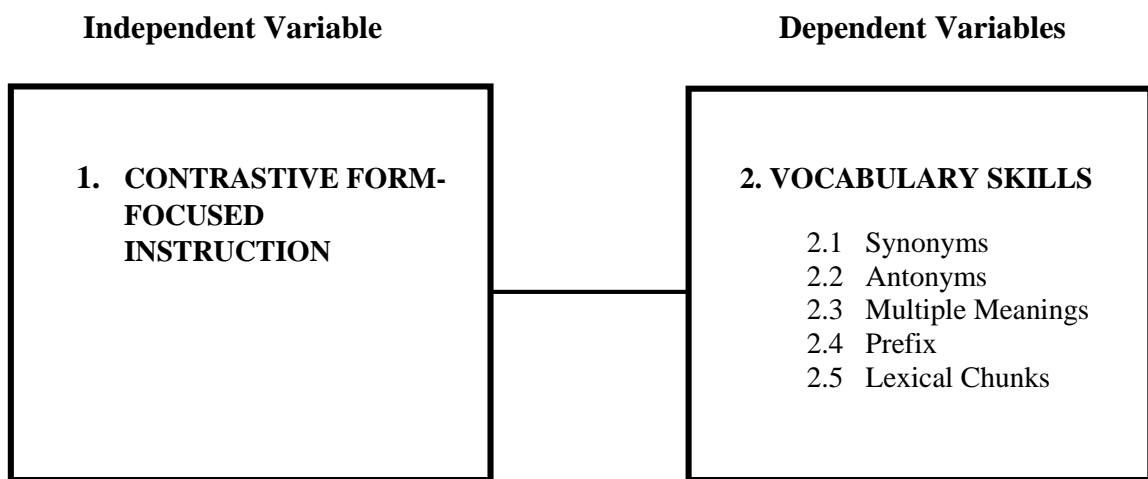
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2.4. Conceptual Framework

The paradigm guides the present study that focuses on the efficacy of CFFI in improving the vocabulary skills of senior high school students. The theories and concepts presented in the theoretical framework serve as the basis for the research paradigm, and they also help in the conception and formulation of the current study.

Figure 1

Research Paradigm



3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

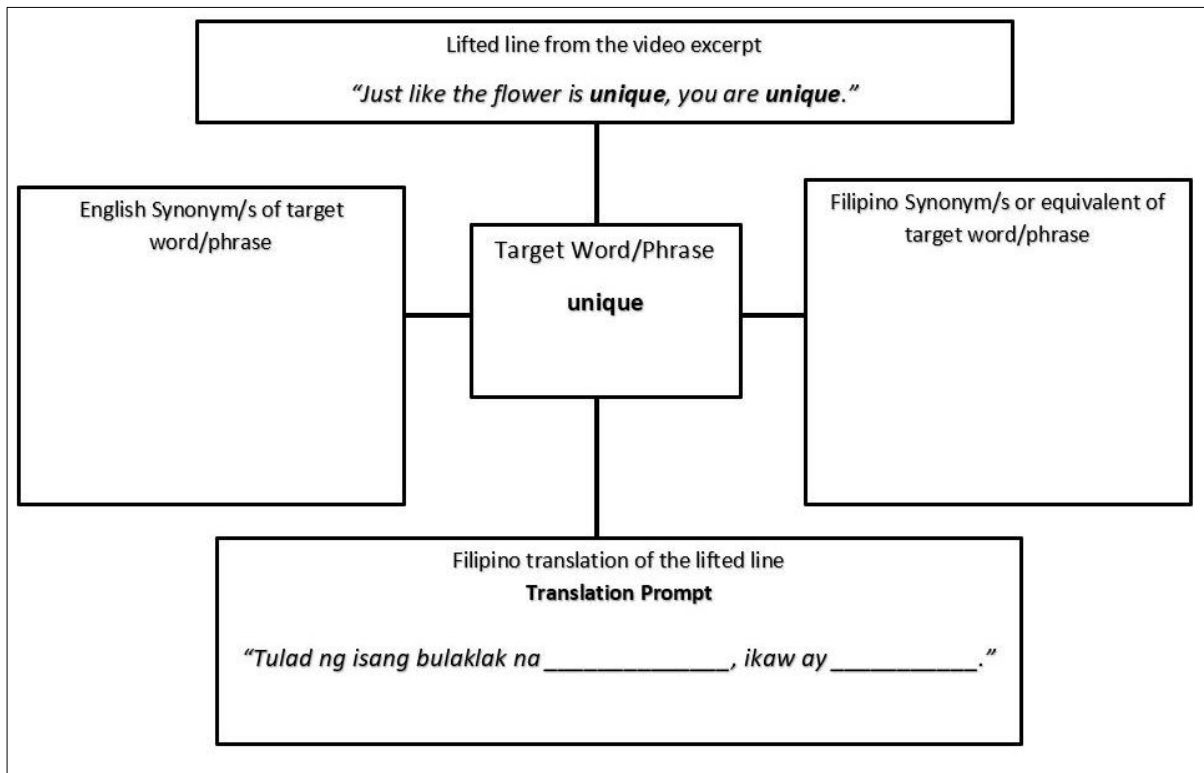
The present study aimed to investigate the impact of CFFI on the vocabulary skills of the target participants. Specifically, the study focused on enhancing the participants' proficiency in synonyms, antonyms, multiple meanings of words, prefixes, and lexical chunks. The study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, which is considered advantageous over true experimental designs as it does not disrupt the existing classroom setting (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). The group of students involved in this study was not randomly assigned and, instead, utilized their pre-determined sectioning, a sampling technique that Creswell (2013) calls convenience sampling because the naturally formed group in the school setup, such as class sections, was used for the study.

3.2. Research Procedure

Before the treatment, the pre-test – a multiple choice type-test comprised of sentences utilizing the target vocabulary words – was given to the student-participants. The start of the treatment ensued the week after. Lessons in oral communication can use videos to serve as a springboard for a specific topic; in the present study, the three oral communication lessons selected are types of communication context, intercultural communication, and functions of communication. The video excerpts and video lessons used in the study had intralingual subtitles, which means that the subtitles directly run parallel to the language and words used by the characters or narration onscreen. Before showing the film excerpts, the teacher provided a brief explanation of their context so learners would have an idea of the context of the selected video clips.

The class was divided into several groups after viewing the excerpts or video lessons; then, each group received sheets of paper with a cross-linguistic semantic map with a target vocabulary word lifted from the video/s. Learners were given ten minutes to work on the semantic maps assigned to them. Also, learners were allowed to use their dictionaries.

The semantic map provided a visualizable framework of the thought process involved in the contrastive analysis of the target lexical items. According to Dilek and Yuruk (2013), semantic mapping is not new in vocabulary teaching. It would practically work well with the process of CFFI because the latter is an approach that also involves a negotiation of meaning with the learners. Incidentally, being involved in semantic mapping in class triggers students' prior knowledge about a lexical item and "provides an efficient way to strengthen keywords, allowing students to include the new vocabulary into their existing schemata. Semantic mapping assists the learner to learn unknown words through known words in a semantically related network" (Dilek & Yuruk, 2013, p. 1534). In a visual framework, similarities and differences in the meaning of the target L1 words and their Filipino equivalent will gain more saliency and comprehensibility. More importantly, since learners' L1 is one of the tools needed to accomplish the task, more participation and engagement can be expected from the learners. This is crucial because when learners are allowed to use their native language, they can more easily express themselves and understand the content being taught. This can help to build confidence and motivation, leading to more effective learning.

Figure 2*Sample Cross-linguistic Semantic Map*

At the center of the semantic map is a target word lifted from one of the subtitled videos used in this study and above it is the exact line/s showing how the word is used. On the left side, learners have to fill in with one or two English synonyms of the target word or phrase while on the left side, learners have to fill it in with the target word or phrase's Filipino equivalent. The bottom box contains the Filipino translation of the English line with the translation of the L1 word missing so learners need to fill it in with the most appropriate L2 translation of the target word.

During treatment, learners were given ten minutes to accomplish their assigned cross-linguistic semantic map/s. Antonyms and prefixes of target words, if there were any, were also covered and discussed during the explicit discussion. After the allotted time, learners were asked to post their answers on the board so the teacher could use them as a springboard to initiate explicit instruction on the target vocabulary words. The teacher then checked the answers in the semantic map and provided corrective feedback when needed. In addition,

several students initiated FonF by asking questions about linguistic items during the class interaction and by clarifying how the target L2 word correctly translates to their L1.

Since a combination of noticing and practice is deemed more effective in foreign language learning (Bataineh, et al, 2017), cross-linguistic instruction was followed by a vocabulary exercise that would require them to use the vocabulary words in sentences. Another ten minutes was allotted for the task after which, the teacher called volunteer students to share their output. Corrective feedback and clarification were provided when needed. According to Williams (1999, as cited in Bataineh, et al, 2017), "the combination of noticing and rehearsal is essential as cognitive processes connect the information in the short-term memory with that previously stored in the long-term memory and into the learners' schemata" (p. 3).

Finally, the teacher did a vocabulary recall task with the students at the start of the next session. In this review, the teacher handed out copies of the fill-in-the-blank vocabulary exercise that included all the words from the CFFI sessions. In this exercise, students had to choose the correct vocabulary word inside a word inventory provided inside a box right before the test items. Students were given 10 minutes for the task; after which, answers were checked, and clarifications were made.

Table 1

Treatment Stages per CFFI Session

STEPS	Tasks
Step 1	Learners watched the video excerpt or video lesson with subtitles.
Step 2	Learners worked on assigned cross-linguistic semantic maps.
Step 3	The Teacher used learners' outputs to initiate and conduct CFFI.
Step 4	Learners were instructed to write sentences using the target vocabulary words.
Step 5	Volunteers were called to share their answers in class so corrective feedback and negotiation of meanings could be provided.
Step 6	Vocabulary review was done in the following session.

3.3. Participants of the Study

The study was conducted in one public school in the Philippines. Twenty males and twenty-three females from one section of the General Academic Strand were involved. It is noteworthy that the students, being in the academic strand, are regarded as the ones who would most likely pursue college after graduating from senior high school.

All participants of this study underwent the modular distance learning platform for two years – grades nine and ten – during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is then not surprising that the majority of the participants have experienced significant learning loss, and this can be gleaned from their performance in class and the teacher's assessment of written outputs such as essay writing tasks where poor command of the L2 is evident. As far as language proficiency is concerned, the student participants are a heterogeneous group. All students' first language is Filipino or Tagalog.

Before the beginning of the treatment, students were informed that they would be part of a study that would require them to watch video excerpts and video lessons and that they would also be participating in a series of tasks right after watching the videos.

The present study used a convenience sampling technique (Creswell, 2013) in choosing the participants. Convenience sampling would be most feasible since the conduct of CFFI would involve working in groups, so involving students who all belong to the same class, would provide ease in the facilitation of the treatment and no disruption of the schedule of classes will be made.

3.4. Research Instrument

To ensure that the pretest and post-test were valid measures of vocabulary proficiency, a panel of five experts in the field of language education and research reviewed the questions for content and face validity and suggestions were incorporated in the revisions of the instruments. Both the pretest and post-test were composed of fifty vocabulary test items where each vocabulary word, lifted from the subtitled video clips, was used in sentences. A total of ten multiple-choice questions were allotted for each vocabulary skill. To ensure that the post-test evaluated the students' learning progress and provided a measure of how well they learned new vocabulary, the test items in the post-test used the target vocabulary words in sentences that were different from the ones in the pretest.

To assess the reliability of the instruments, a pilot test was administered to twenty non-participating students from the school, also from the same strand where the participants for the study were taken from. The pilot test was designed to be similar in format and content to the actual pretest and post-test. The scores of the non-participants from the pilot test were subjected to reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the resulting estimate was 0.836. The reliability test performed on the instrument concerning vocabulary skills in terms of synonyms, antonyms, multiple meanings, prefixes, and lexical chunks are 0.780, 0.831, 0.793, 0.786, 0.799 respectively, and interpreted as acceptable. This indicates good consistency in the scores across the different items and vocabulary skill components on the test.

3.5. Data Analysis

Following the completion of three sets of lessons and administering the posttest the following day, necessary data were gathered, recorded, and prepared for submission to the statistician for analysis. To ascertain the notable distinction between the pretest and post-test scores of the student participants, a Paired T-test was utilized to determine whether there was a statistically significant improvement in the scores of the students from the pretest to the post-test. This analysis would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the instructional intervention employed in enhancing the students' performance.

4. Findings

Table 2

Statistical Summary of Pretest and Post-Test Results

Vocabulary Building Skills	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Mean Difference	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Synonyms	6.23	1.878	6.98	1.691	.750	2.795	43	.008
Antonyms	3.02	2.454	6.20	2.152	3.182	8.037	43	.000
Multiple Meanings	5.64	1.672	5.93	2.128	.295	.864	43	.392
Prefix	5.93	2.218	6.70	1.852	.773	2.521	43	.015
Lexical Chunks	4.80	1.799	6.64	1.571	1.841	7.570	43	.000
Overall	25.61	7.045	32.45	7.086	6.841	9.106	43	.000

Table 2 shows a comparative statistical summary of the pretest and post-test results. As can be gleaned from the data results, there is an increase in the mean score of all vocabulary skills most notably with antonyms and lexical chunks which both reflect a remarkable increase. Under antonyms, the difference between the mean of the pretest ($M=3.02$, $SD=2.45$) and the mean of the post-test ($M=6.20$, $SD=2.15$) scores is significant, $t(44)=8.04$, $p < 0.05$. Similarly, the difference between the mean of the pretest ($M=4.80$, $SD=1.80$) and the mean of the post-test ($M=6.64$, $SD=1.57$) scores under lexical chunks is also significant, $t(44)=7.57$, $p < 0.05$. These results suggest that there was a significant difference in the participants' vocabulary-building skills between the pretest and post-test assessments. More importantly, the increase in the mean scores for both antonyms and lexical chunks is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-values.

Although not as notable compared with the results under antonyms and lexical chunks, synonyms and prefix also share a marked improvement. The mean scores for synonyms show a noteworthy statistical difference between the pretest ($M=6.23$, $SD=1.88$) and the post-test ($M=6.98$, $SD=1.69$) with a p-value of $p < 0.05$. It is almost a similar case with prefix whose difference in the mean scores between the pretest ($M=5.93$, $SD=2.22$) and the post-test ($M=6.70$, $SD=1.85$) is significant with a p-value of $p < 0.05$.

Multiple meanings is the one vocabulary skill that shows negligible improvement. Table 2 shows the difference between the pretest ($M=5.64$, $SD=1.67$) and the post-test ($M=5.93$, $SD=2.13$) scores with a p-value of 0.39. Studies have shown that this vocabulary skill presents learning challenges among second language learners because there is a vast number of words that have multiple meanings (Rodd et al., 2002; Armstrong, 2012; Brysbaert and Biemiller, 2017 as cited in Booton et al., 2021). To fully comprehend a word and its appropriate usage, learners must comprehend its various components, such as definitions, word combinations, grammatical features, word components, and style (Schmitt, 2000 as cited in Lin, 2014). Lin (2014) further posits that if the written form of words with multiple meanings remains the same when it is being used to convey a different meaning, learners may struggle to identify its intended meaning within the context; thus, multiple meanings of words would truly require more time to be learned and would need more direct instruction from the teacher.

Given sufficient time, providing CFFI to language learners about multiple meanings of words can prove to be highly beneficial because this approach involves highlighting the

differences in forms and meanings between target L2 words and their L1 equivalents. By emphasizing semantic nuances and the L1 translation of each of those nuances, learners can gain a deeper understanding of the subtleties of the target L2 words.

Nonetheless, the overall results show that the difference between the pretest ($M=25.61$, $SD=7.05$) and post-test ($M=32.45$, $SD=7.09$) scores is significant, $t(44)=9.11$, $p < 0.05$. And even though, improvement in some vocabulary skills may seem negligible, they can still be regarded as significant progress following an intervention that spanned for only three weeks. Since the findings of this study offer statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis, CFFI employed with the participants of this research was, therefore, effective in enhancing their vocabulary skills during the three-week treatment period.

5. Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the efficacy of contrastive form-focused instruction (CFFI) in bolstering the vocabulary proficiency of grade 11 senior high school students, specifically those enrolled in the general academic strand. Furthermore, the study sought to investigate whether the incorporation of subtitled videos as a complementary tool alongside CFFI could contribute to the augmentation of vocabulary learning and retention.

During the conduct of CFFI using the cross-linguistic semantic maps, it was apparent from students' answers that they were still oblivious of the semantic nuances of and differences among words that are synonymous or words that have multiple meanings so words that they wrote down in their cross-linguistic semantic maps needed to be discussed and translated so they would have an idea how they are different from the target L2 word and they can appropriately use them in sentences. This way, their schema of a target L2 word is enriched which is pivotal if "learners' repertoire is regarded as potential semiotic resources" (Maruma and Matlhaka, 2020, p.10188). By potentially bridging what learners know to what they want to learn, CFFI then essentially upholds the principles of Schema Theory which explains how readers use their prior knowledge to understand a text. When exposed to unfamiliar words in the target L2, learners try to assimilate their schemata, which are incidentally comprised of their L1 vocabulary, with the novel lexical items presented in a text to comprehend them. In this regard, struggling learners, such as those who have learning gaps and learning loss, would benefit a lot because their current lexical schema will serve as their springboard to expand their

vocabulary. Frustration on the part of the learners may be avoided and just like what happened during the CFFI sessions with the participants of this study, the struggling learners in the group were more participative and attentive during the discussion.

However, as the results in some vocabulary skills would show, significant vocabulary development for second language learners will take some time and need consistent and rigorous vocabulary instruction. CFFI can provide the most critical foundation for vocabulary development, but to harness the potential of their lexical repertoire, they must learn other reading skills to further improve the breadth and depth of their vocabulary knowledge. This may be the reason they still struggled or experienced confusion during the post-test when words such as those under synonyms or multiple meanings or prefixes were presented in sentences where words unfamiliar to them may appear and be a detriment to overall comprehension. This further reflects the poor reading comprehension skills of students, a skill which also takes time to develop and needs adequate vocabulary knowledge to correctly decipher meaning.

The potential of CFFI to address the vocabulary dilemma of Filipino learners cannot be discounted, and the results of the present study support data from various research (Ellis, 2001; Ellis, 2016; Spada & Lightbown, 2008, as cited in Kellem & Halvorsen, 2018; Chen & Li, 2022) that show how form-focused instruction aids learners to focus on forms in input which may remain unnoticed to learners if attention is not specifically drawn to them. A recent study by Nakatsukasa and Loewen (2017) highlights this significant noticing effect that transpires during contrastive explicit instruction led by the teacher, and they argue how the process considerably aids the learning of the target L2. In addition, the utilization of subtitled videos in this study to facilitate the noticing of target L2 words provides further credence to a study done by Baranowska (2020) who contends that subtitles offer advantages that facilitate language learning, including incidental or intentional vocabulary acquisition. According to Vanderplank (1988, as cited in Baranowska, 2020), subtitles help learners notice unfamiliar L2 vocabulary words that could go unnoticed if they are only relayed through the audio input. Needless to say, audiovisual subtitles, as a rich source of authentic language input, streamline the process involved in CFFI.

It is also worth noting that empirical studies show how a more direct approach to teaching, which form-focused instruction integrates, proved more beneficial to learners,

especially to those considered novice or struggling learners (Center for Dyslexia MTSU, 2019). To the author's knowledge, there seems to be no existing literature in the Philippines that examines the potential of this mode of cross-linguistic vocabulary instruction that may prove to be an effective teaching approach that can pave the way to a spectrum of potential remedies for Filipino learners' language deficiencies and, more importantly, to a variety of strategies for vocabulary teaching and learning.

The potential of CFFI in addressing the vocabulary dilemma among Filipino learners cannot be discounted. However, as the results of the study show, the decrease in proficiency level among participants in particular vocabulary categories highly suggests a need for more explicit instruction coupled with cross-linguistic comparison of L1 and L2 from teachers to build a lexical foundation capable of growth and development. This underscores the necessity for teachers to conduct CFFI over extended periods, particularly for second language learners, especially for struggling learners. By doing so, teachers can provide learners ample opportunities for practice and explicit instruction, ultimately leading to improved proficiency levels. Indeed, words that represent knowledge already familiar to learners are more easily acquired than words that are completely new or unfamiliar (Nation, 2001).

6. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of contrastive form-focused instruction (CFFI) in improving the vocabulary skills of grade 11 public school senior high school students from the general academic strand. Additionally, it aimed to determine whether supplementing CFFI with subtitled videos to introduce the target lexical items can aid in the enhancement of vocabulary learning and retention.

The present study utilized a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design to test the dependent variables before and after the intervention. After the conduct of a three-week treatment with forty-four learners and a comparative analysis of the student-participants pretest and post-test results, findings indicate that CFFI significantly improved learners' understanding and recall of the target words, leading to better vocabulary skills. Data from the statistical analysis of the scores of both the pretest and post-test showed that the mean score for all skills increased, with antonyms and lexical chunks showing the most remarkable improvement. The p-values for both skills are significant, indicating a statistical difference. Synonyms and prefix

similarly showed improvement with a significant difference in mean scores. However, results in multiple meanings exhibited almost no improvement with a non-significant p-value. Nevertheless, the overall results suggest a significant difference in participants' vocabulary-building skills between pretest and post-test assessments.

The study's findings are consistent with prior research that highlights the effectiveness of FFI for teaching and learning vocabulary. Notably, the study highlights how the use of learners' L1 can significantly aid in the learning process of L2 vocabulary words necessary to develop a lexical repertoire capable of further growth. By leveraging the students' L1 in vocabulary instruction, educators can help students bridge the gap between their existing knowledge and new vocabulary words, resulting in more effective and efficient learning outcomes. This study also demonstrates the potential of CFFI coupled with subtitled videos to enhance vocabulary learning and should be considered in future educational practices thereby further exploration of their potential can be made to help remedy the vocabulary deficiency of Filipino learners.

Since the findings of this study offer statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis, CFFI employed with the participants of this research was, therefore, effective in enhancing the vocabulary skills of second language learners during the three-week treatment period. Results also suggest that CFFI has the potential to provide a valuable learning platform for learners to develop a more nuanced understanding of L2 vocabulary words and their semantic differences from learners' L1.

As previously iterated in this paper, learners primarily need to build a good vocabulary repertoire to expand their lexical knowledge. For second language learners who still have to grapple with the difficulties that their L1 may bring in the language learning process, proper intervention and explicit instruction coming from the teacher would truly help learners build a solid vocabulary foundation. This is where the potential of CFFI steps in since it utilizes learners' L1 as an all-important tool to help students navigate the semantic nuances of target L2 vocabulary words. Incidentally, the use of L1 among second language learners is not only inevitable (Zulfikar, 2018) because the target language will always trigger connections with their L1 as this is an inherent cognitive process regardless of the proficiency level of the learner (Horst et al., 2010 as cited in Madriñan, 2014). As implied by both Laufer and Girsai's (2008) research and Jahangard's (2022) replication study, the role of translation, which is a primary

component in the CFFI process, "should not be ignored and the importance of L1 in learning L2 is undeniable" (Jahangard, 2022, p. 11).

Aside from helping to contribute to a body of research that aims to address the lexical poverty faced by Filipino learners, this study primarily attempts to explore the effectiveness of CFFI in improving the vocabulary skills of senior high school learners, especially in a context where English is the mandated medium of instruction. The use of cross-linguistic analysis in instruction can be a useful and innovative approach to helping learners understand the similarities and differences between their first language (L1) and the target language (L2), which can eventually promote the development of their L2 proficiency. Moreover, challenging a long-standing belief that English should be the sole medium of instruction in English language classes is important, as this notion may not be effective for all learners. Research has shown that the use of L1 in learning a second language can be beneficial, particularly for struggling learners and those who have experienced setbacks in their learning due to the pandemic. The lack of studies on this pedagogical approach in the Philippines highlights the need for further research to examine its potential benefits. By igniting interest among educators and researchers, this study can pave the way for more effective language teaching strategies that consider and cater to the unique needs and experiences of Filipino learners especially those in public schools.

Rigorous L2 vocabulary instruction for second language learners is crucial at early education levels, as evidenced by the multiple meanings results and the decrease in proficiency levels in some vocabulary skills. It is recommended that educators prioritize the inclusion of dedicated vocabulary instruction, coupled with essential vocabulary learning strategies, before introducing lessons to students, as simply increasing input does not necessarily accelerate vocabulary acquisition in a second language.

Another recommendation worth considering is for teachers to incorporate CFFI into content-area instruction in subjects such as science, social studies, or mathematics. This is particularly effective because students are more likely to retain new vocabulary when they see it in context and can make connections between the new word and their prior knowledge using their L1. More importantly, curriculum developers in the Philippines could adapt lesson planning frameworks that can incorporate explicit instruction in vocabulary teaching. Anderson's TATE framework (2020) which stands for Text, Analysis, Task, Exploration, is a

curriculum design framework that integrates both task-based language teaching (TBLT) and task-supported language teaching (TSLT). In the context of the present study that sought to highlight the efficacy of CFFI, the TATE framework is relevant because it allows for a systematic and structured approach to addressing specific grammatical or lexical features. The TATE framework recognizes the significance of form-focused instruction in language learning, but it also emphasizes the integration of these explicit learning opportunities within meaningful and authentic tasks. The TATE framework provides a systematic approach to addressing specific linguistic features in instruction. This is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where English is taught as a second language and there is often a need for explicit instruction and practice with grammar or vocabulary.

Finally, since vocabulary acquisition takes time, researchers who would like to explore the affordances of CFFI for vocabulary skill enhancement may conduct longitudinal studies to examine the sustained impact of CFFI on learners' vocabulary skills over an extended period. This would provide insights into the long-term effectiveness and retention of vocabulary learning through CFFI.

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